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Paper 01

Al Jourgensen: The Explicit

Many artists around the world have influenced us individually through their pieces of art work. Each and every artist has a unique style of their own. Their work usually exposes and makes a statement about their social views and concerns to their audience. Al Jourgensen fits into this category of artists which of whom is very blunt and straightforward when positioning and expounding his point of view on a certain issue. Throughout his music career Al Jourgensen used his music as a way to express his beliefs in relation to problems we face day to day. His music has become an influence on many because not only does it express his points of view, but it also expresses his personal life as an influence on his music, which many people could relate to.

Al Jourgensen’s music career began at a very young age. When he turned eight years old, he was given his first acoustic guitar. He then gradually became a great fan of loud music because he spent most of his time at the race track where his father worked. Many factors affected Al personally, which he later on uses in his works. One of these factors was his drug addiction. At the age of 14, he was sent to a drug clinic for rehabilitation. Later on, he was imprisoned five years, for possession of drugs. After this incident he officially quit drugs and decided to use his experience as a theme for his future music. His main objective for using the idea of drug addiction in his lyrics was for his audience to learn from his own mistakes.

Starting his way through the music world, he began working as a DJ at Club 950 while he was in college. He then met “Grovie Man” and started playing as the guitarist in his band called “Special Effect”. He became very popular and eventually in 1981, created his own first band called “Ministry” (Prato). Paul Barker is introduced to Al and becomes his partner and best friend in his band. By creating his own band, Al was able to express and share his beliefs, thoughts, and experiences that have had a big impact on his own life. He not only wanted to convey himself to show the world what he had gone through, but he wanted to show people his perspective on ideas which they may have never thought of. He brings about most of these issues in his album “Psalm 69”. This album is to become one of his first albums where he discusses drug addiction, mindless patriotism, religious hypocrisy as well as, in his view, America’s corruption.

Drug addiction, alcoholism and religious views were not his only concerns and themes for his music. Al loved to add his political views and expressed them quite frankly. His major and favorite target was President George W. Bush. He dedicated three of his albums for this cause: The Houses of the Mole, Rio Grande Blood, and finally ended his “George-Bush-hating trilogy” with the final album he named The Last Sucker (Jeffries). In all three albums he sings about the “corrupt America” and its leader, President Bush (Jeffries). He initiates his target on President Bush, by talking about his perspective on the wars that America is involved in. In his lyrics he tells stories about young Americans, whom he believes, are dying for nothing, and as his song is titled, for “No Glory”. This song in particular allows him to open people’s eyes to the problems that are evolving in America and its relation in the world. This music is very effective because many people are able to relate to this specific topic on war, since many have experienced being a soldier or had lost close friends or relatives in the war in Iraq. This style of songs gives the listeners a chance to be exposed to an unusual perspective, and also allows for people to change their views they previously had on war, America and their president.

Another very effective song by Al is found in his album Rio Grande Blood. The main focus of the song is the reason President Bush is in Iraq. In his song, he declares that we, the people of American, are using “blood for oil” (Ministry). He continues discussing how the Americans are not conscious about their patriotism. In other words, we are supporting our country blindly; not knowing exactly what is going on behind the scenes. The band designed the cover of their album in a way to portray Bush as the conqueror or as one of their tracks is named, the “Great Satan”. This album, furthermore targets President Bush in the next track called “Lies Lies Lies”, where Al is not afraid of questioning the “truth” about September 11th (Jeffries). The lyrics found in these tracks have had a major impact on the listeners. The ideas that the band portray leave the listeners thinking. The way Ministry exposes the music alone, makes any listener curious about his views, because they express themselves so bluntly that they are in no fear of anyone. Their explicit personality is what makes them stand out from other bands.

The type of music Al and his band uses in his albums varies. It depends on the way they want it to reflect on the song and its topic. The music choice is chosen with quite cleverness, because it is the music that gives the song its depth and impact and allows its significance to be prominent. For instance, in his album “Houses of the Mole”, he uses music that has neither “melodies to it nor any innovation” (Loftus). It has been categorized as ‘not real music’, but rather a “hard tack” since it is discussing the topic of war (Loftus). The music choice is a way to emphasize that war is a serious matter and by using that style of music, they are accomplishing their purpose, which is to have their listeners focus on the lyrics of the song. By making the music not that entertaining, the lyrics are given the chance to stand out, which therefore, emphasizes the importance of the lyrics. On the other hand, in his albums “Rio Grande Blood” and “The Last Sucker”, the music is described to be loud and angry to emphasize their anger on what President Bush is doing. Music choice makes a big difference on the way it is perceived by its listeners, because it is whether the music grabs the attention of the listener. The Ministry’s music seems to always grab the attention of their listeners because it is very different.

Although his music has a unique style of its own, it has a meaning and purpose to it. The main goal is to show the people the truth about what is going on around them. The Ministry as a whole wants to speak up and express their anger as well as have the listeners wake up and realize what is going on around them in the world. This is because in the end, a single act can affect a whole community, and they want the listeners to become aware of that. They have a mission to expose the world with what they are unable to identify on their own. In their standpoint, America is corrupted, the wars are useless and a waste of our blood and it is about time that we, the Americans, took action. Their “intense, abrasive and pounding” music flavor is what has grabbed the attention of listeners nationwide (Ministry). If the music styles and themes had not been so distinctive from others, they would not have received all the attention they have today. As result of their different style, more and more people have become curious about the group’s music and have become interested in the way Al detonates his thoughts and outlooks at his listeners, releasing all his anger without fear. Another factor that has gained their popularity was the way people were able to relate to the themes of their music and the greatest example was drug addiction and alcoholism. Since people are able to relate to the topics discussed, it therefore begins to influence them as well. This is exactly like the topic on war, where Al sings about young soldiers whom have died in the war in Iraq. This adds an emotional effect on the listeners, allowing many to sympathize with what is going on. This topic also brings awareness to those who never thought about war. Over all, Al’s mission has been achieved, because not only did he express himself as he had wanted to, but also has left his listeners with something to think about.

Works Cited

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